

Sustainable community development from a cultural perspective - A case study of Chinese immigrants in Greater Vancouver

Ting Pan, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, UBC*

Raymond Cole, School of Architecture, UBC

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Greater Vancouver has experienced a dramatic influx of international immigration in the past decades. The demographic change has two implications to the development in this region. First, the accelerated development has a negative impact on the environment. Second, the ethnic diversity of this region raises issues of communication and cross-cultural understanding of this issue.

The concept of sustainable community has been introduced as a means to protect the environment while promoting a healthy community. However, effective communication is critical to its acceptance by the heterogeneous population of Greater Vancouver.

This research addresses the following questions: What housing preferences do immigrants bring to their living environment? How are these preferences influenced by their expectations, culture, and previous living experience? What are the implications of these preferences to sustainable community development in Greater Vancouver?

A case study of the Chinese immigrant community in Greater Vancouver will be presented. It will offer theoretical insights explaining their preferences for location of their homes, housing features, transportation alternatives and neighborhood composition. The implications of this research to design professionals, planners and policy makers will be discussed. The study examines individual choices and preferences using interviews assisted with comparative pictures and games.